

Monthly Talks (October 2023 to September 2024)

Here is a record of our monthly meeting talks in iU3A's tenth year. For more recent talks, go to our web page [here](#). What appears below is almost exactly what appeared on the website immediately after each meeting.

October 2023



132: David Aaronovitch, Journalist, Broadcaster and Author: Our 10th Anniversary Talk: 'Oh What Happened to Me, Whatever Happened to You?': With 171 people in the room David Aaronovitch drew one of our biggest audiences to date.

He was our first speaker ten years ago and we were delighted to welcome him again as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations. He has been looking back at 2013 and quoted a number of statements by politicians at the time — promises and predictions — which provoked laughter from today's audience. Now we have climate change underway, we have authoritarian leaders thinking about their legacy rather than what is right and a threat to the liberal values we took for granted in the 70s. He found it difficult to find much positive aspects of how the UK has developed over the last ten years. When asked what he thought about the next ten years, he was fearful. But admitted he could only see a couple of years ahead, so much could change. The future of American politics was a worry to him and democracy seemed under siege, even within Europe. The floor was bursting with some mega questions, such as — 'what did he think about migration'. We needed another 40 minutes on each of them.

Apart from showing our appreciation for David's return thanks were given to the founders of Islington U3A, ten years ago, Anne Weyman and the original committee members. To hear David's insights in his imitable style click on the recording links: [132-1](#) & [132-2](#)

November



133: Frances Pinter, Spreading and sharing knowledge: Dr Frances Pinter was the speaker at our November Monthly Meeting following our AGM and she described her fascinating life with clarity and humour. She is the Founder and Executive Director of "Knowledge Unlatched", a not-for-profit company creating a global library consortium enabling sustainable open access academic book publishing. She also founded the Central European University Press and Pinter Publishers. Her extensive travels and her work in Eastern European countries will make for fascinating reading when she gets

time to write her memoir. The AGM proceedings and Frances' talk are available to view here: [AGM](#), [133](#)

December

No meeting

January 2024



134: Peter Popham, Gandhi vs. Churchill, triumph and disaster at the end of the Raj: Peter Popham, novelist, playwright and journalist, gave us a fascinating account of Gandhi and Churchill, the two leading protagonists during India's journey to independence. He compared their early lives, education and beliefs. Churchill, a failed schoolboy, educated himself while in India and became pushy and confident, seeing the British as the natural successors to the Moghul Emperors. Gandhi, married at 14,

studied law in London where he also discovered and embraced vegetarianism. After 20 years in South Africa his fame was spreading. Returning to India and leading many peaceful demonstrations against

the British, he was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu nationalist. Surprisingly Gandhi and Churchill only met once.

February



135: Julia Sheppard, Silas Burroughs, the man who made Wellcome: It is surprising that Silas Burroughs' story was unknown to most of us. We all know about his partner, Wellcome, but Burroughs was the driving force in their partnership in the early days; he was the visionary one and embraced modern marketing methods to spread his ideas and promote business deals. Like his father, Burroughs was politically aware and philanthropic. He worked in pharmaceuticals all his life and all over the world.

Burroughs & Co made and sold medicines including their newly invented tabloid tablets, dressings, inhalers and creams. Sadly after much success the two partners quarrelled and when Silas died aged 49 his widow had to endure a court case to settle his affairs and to resolve the rift with Wellcome. Silas was advanced in his promotion of the 8 hour day and other workers' rights such as profit-sharing; he wrote pamphlets, made speeches, founded a hospital and supported the arts. We are grateful to today's speaker for bringing him to life. Julia's book on Burroughs is available on Amazon or from the Lutterworth Press www.lutterworth.com at £60 for hardback and £20 for paperback.

March



136: Jane Anderson, Getting to Zero: HIV in London in 2024: It was astonishing to learn that since 1981 85,000,000 people worldwide have acquired HIV. Professor Anderson told a compelling story about the progress which has been made since then. Now people are living longer than ever with HIV and it is not just a disease of the young. Modern drug treatments including injections reduce the virus to "undetectable" and this renders patients non-infectious. There is also a Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis but this is not yet available free to all. Testing is widespread now including an opt-out test in A&E departments.

HIV thrives wherever there are inequalities so the solutions are not just medical, but also political, social, economic and cultural. Stigma remains but lessens as knowledge increases. The national plan of 2021 is to achieve zero new infections by 2030. It was heartening to hear that London is playing its part in this campaign. We all must inform ourselves, talk about the issues and advocate for more services for those who are living with HIV. Recording links: [136-1](#) and [136-2](#)

April



137: Christian Wolmar, The Liberation Line: On the day of the Opposition announcement that they will bring most parts of the railway system into public ownership, Mr Wolmar still found time to address our Monthly Meeting. He illustrated his presentation with fascinating photographs of the men, engines and infrastructure involved in the rebuilding of the Normandy railways after D-Day. British and American men, mostly engineers and rail workers rather than soldiers, formed a special regiment to undertake this huge task. The rebuilding of the line was essential to keep the Allied forces fuelled and armed and these men made a vital contribution to the war effort. Christian's new book "The Liberation Line" proved popular with our members and further copies are available on his website www.christianwolmar.co.uk. Recording links: [137-1](#) and [137-2](#). Presentation: [137](#)

May



138: Andrew Whitehead, London's most sensational shootout: Do you know when was the last time the Metropolitan Police asked the army to help them? Or how many and in which event were the most Met Police officers killed? Or have artillery ever been deployed as a weapon in London streets? All the answers to these questions were in this nicely illustrated talk given by Andrew Whitehead about we call the Siege of Sydney Street on January 1911. It was, literally, a sensational event as it was the first time what we now call the tabloid press provided mass coverage of what happened using new techniques of taking and printing photographs. The siege was in the heart of what was then a very large Jewish community. Three Latvian anarchist nationalists had, in some ways comically, tried to raid a jewellers

in Houndsditch. They failed and were trapped inside a neighbouring building. As they were armed, the police quickly discovered that, even with their own rifles, they were unable to dislodge them. Hence nearby army troops were called in and to make doubly sure of a rapid end to the siege, artillery and machine guns were also summoned. This had the effect required, a fire (somewhat mysteriously) broke out and the anarchists were killed. Andrew provided a fascinating and very well researched backstory about why the anarchists were in London at that time. Interestingly, this has echoes of public alarm today. Of course the figure most remembered about the siege was Winston Churchill, Liberal Home Secretary at the time. He insisted on attending and probably interfering in the events of the day. Once again the new style photographs were able to show him “in action” on the day. And the answers to the questions, in order, are; the first and only time, three and yes although neither the artillery nor the machine guns were actually used. No recording available.

June



139: Bob Gilbert, The Mystery of the Underground Mosquito: We were delighted to welcome Bob to address one of our monthly meetings again. This is the third time he has entertained us and his subject engendered much interest as always. The mystery of the underground mosquito was explained in fascinating detail but it is a rare event to actually see one of these on the Underground! Mosquitoes have lived in the Underground for 70 years, since the second world war, when they were inadvertently carried down in blankets and clothing. Bob's latest book proved very popular among members, who asked several questions after the talk. The book *The Missing Musk* is available to buy on Amazon if you missed the opportunity to buy it last week. Recording links: [139-1](#) and [139-2](#).

July



140: Frances Crook, Does the UK need a written Constitution? Frances worked at the Howard League for Penal Reform for thirty years. On her retirement she, with Baroness d'Souza, was supported by a philanthropist to set up the Commission on Political Power. They drew on the knowledge and expertise of politicians, scientists, philosophers, artists and lawyers and produced a report on the future of the House of Lords. They believed that democracy must be continually re-assessed and amended and drew up a plan for a Senate to replace the Lords. They recommended the ending of hereditary peerages and a reduction in numbers to under 500. The Senate would include local government leaders, representatives from organisations such as the BMA, as well as scientists and artists. There would be time limits on their service periods and there would be opportunities for members of the general public to contribute. Our members were very interested in Frances's explanation of how our constitution needs to change, and she kindly answered their many questions after her presentation. Recording links: [140-1](#) and [140-2](#)

August



141: Mike Clowes, Saving the NHS: At the August Monthly Meeting we welcomed Mike Clowes, the CEO of Islington GP Federation. This organisation employs 350 people who work mainly for the NHS but also the local council and other relevant bodies such as the Kings Fund. This model does not exist everywhere and the Islington Federation has become a leading example of how to support, encourage and train GPs. Most activities are NHS-funded. Their role is to build partnerships across North Central London making the system more efficient and less random. The Federation also rescues failing practices, pioneers new services such as practice pharmacies and leads outreach to homeless patients. They were instrumental in the introduction of evening and weekend appointments with GPs and community-based gynaecological and ENT services. Recording links: [141-1](#) and [141-2](#)

September 2024



142: Maurice Collins, Eccentric Contraptions and Ingenious Gadgets: We were amused and intrigued to listen to Maurice's presentation at our Monthly Meeting in September. As well as many interesting slides he brought along a suitcase full of amazing artefacts from the unputdownable water bottle to the tennis ball cleaner, from the nose re-shaper to the eyeball massager and from the ladies' funeral skirt lifter to the clockwork teasmaid! These were just a few of the gadgets and appliances which

Maurice has collected in a lifetime of dedication to his subject. Recording links: [142-1](#) and [142-2](#)